ROUTINE ACCESS POLICY
N.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY SERVICES

Approved Date: October 23, 2003
Approved by: Deputy Minister, Marian F. Tyson, Q.C. (signed)
Effective: October 23, 2003

1. POLICY STATEMENT

This "Routine Access" policy for the Department of Community Services is designed to provide persons with an opportunity to obtain certain categories of records without having to submit a *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* Application. It shall be administered in accordance with the following principles:

a) Personal Privacy

The policy shall be applied in a manner which will be considerate and protective of the personal privacy of individuals. Records subject to this policy shall be considered for release and severing in a manner consistent with the provisions of the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*.

b) Timeliness

The Department of Community Services will respond to any "Routine Access" requests in a reasonable and timely fashion.

c) Cost Recovery

Fees for the reproduction and provision of records may be charged where authorized.

d) Transparency

This policy is readily available to the public.

e) Reasonableness

This policy applies only to requests for reasonable quantities of records.

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2. DEFINITIONS

Routine Access is the routine or automatic release, in full or in part, of certain types of administrative or operational records as a matter of course in response to a request without the need for a formal application for records under the *FOIPOP Act.*

Active Dissemination is the periodic and proactive release of information or records in the absence of a request using mechanisms such as the Internet, libraries, etc. Please refer to Schedule "A" for examples of actively disseminated information.

FOIPOP Access is the release of a record in response to a formal FOIPOP application made under the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act.*

A Record "includes books, documents, maps, drawings, photographs, letters, vouchers, papers and any other thing on which information is recorded or stored by graphic, electronic, mechanical or other means, but does not include a computer program or any other mechanism that produces records". (clause 3(1) (k) *FOIPOP Act*)

3. POLICY OBJECTIVES

The objective of the implementation of this policy is the accessibility of certain records routinely without additional administrative time being required of staff to fulfill "Routine Access" requests . It is also to provide a greater certainty of access for those requesting information, and reflect the spirit of openness and accountability of the FOIPOP Legislation.

4. APPLICATION

This policy applies to all staff, and to all records designated under this policy in accordance with the attached Schedule "B".

This policy shall only apply to requests for reasonable quantities of records and shall not apply to a request for more than 50 pages of records in a particular category and/or time period. Repetitive requests by an individual for significant volumes of records or the separation of a request into several small requests totalling a large volume, shall not be subject to the policy. It is important to ensure that the application of the Routine Access policy not unduly interfere with the day-to-day operations of the department.

Requests made under Routine Access do not apply to information subject to exemptions under the *Act*.

Routine Access requests only apply to information created after October 23, 2003.

Personal information is severed with the same criteria and in the same manner as requests made under the *FOIPOP Act*.

5. POLICY DIRECTIVES

Staff are to be sent a memorandum advising of the existence of the policy. The policy is posted on the Department of Community Service's Web site and a print version is provided to all senior managers and staff who normally would receive requests from the public and the media for records subject to the Routine Access Policy.

The requests may be handled by the persons designated as having the responsibility of responding to Routine Access requests.

A tracking system will keep track of the records provided through Routine Access.

6. POLICY GUIDELINES

Once a request for "Routine Access" to a particular record, or set of records, has been received by a designated person, it shall be reviewed to determine if the records are listed in Schedule B.

If the policy applies to the request, the records shall be provided to the applicant within a reasonable period of time, but no later than 30 days from receipt of the request and any authorized fee.

If the policy does not apply to the request, a response to the requester shall be provided promptly and shall indicate what other avenues may be available to obtain the information (e.g. FOIPOP Application, Active Dissemination, already published, etc).

Individuals who apply under the *FOIPOP Act* for records available under the Routine Access Policy will have their application fee returned and the records provided.

7. ACCOUNTABILITY

The Deputy Minister of Community Services shall be accountable for the implementation of this policy.

8. COMPLIANCE

The FOIPOP Administrator of Community Services will be responsible for ensuring the tracking and compliance of this policy which shall be subject to audit by the NS government Corporate Internal Audit Unit.

9. EVALUATION

The "Routine Access" Program established under this policy shall be evaluated on an annual basis by the FOIPOP Administrator.

10. REFERENCES

Requests made under the Routine Access Policy will be subject to the following:

Section 27 of the *FOIPOP Act* which sets the parameters for dealing with personal information.

11. INQUIRIES

Mr. Alex F. Shaw
FOIPOP Administrator
Department of Community Services
PO Box 696
Halifax, NS B3J 2T7

12. APPENDICES

Appendix A: Examples of information provided through Active Dissemination
Appendix B: Schedule of records available through Routine Access.

Schedule A

1. Minister's Biography and department overview (i.e. mission statement, goals, etc.)
2. Department of Community Services Business Plan for current year.
3. Departmental Budget.
4. Services and Divisions - information about each division and the services and programs it provides.
5. Department Contacts - list of phone, fax, email and mailing addresses for each major divisional and geographical offices.
6. Program information on Income Assistance, Family and Children Services, Adoption, Community Support for Adults, Early Childhood Development Strategy, Foster Care, etc.
7. Publications such as "The Outlook" - Autumn (Vol. 1 Issue 1)
8. Links of interest on related issues.
9. Nova Scotia Employment Support and Income Assistance Manual.

The above information may be viewed at the Department's website: www.gov.ns.ca/coms/files/sitemap.asp. Please follow the link called "Access to Information).

Schedule B

1. General Requests
   - the Department of Community Services, through its various divisions, will provide readily available statistics upon verification that the information does not have personal information
   - program audits by Corporate Internal Audit Unit except for those program audits which consist primarily of personal information; any audits which are released pursuant to this policy are subject to the severing provisions applicable to personal information
   - general policy statements of the department
   - general information on programs of the department
   - OHS Routine Inspection Reports

2. Human Resources Division:
   General:
   - organizational charts with position titles
   - generic information of benefits and hours of work
   - job descriptions, pay scale, classification of positions (unionized, non-unionized)
   - secondment agreements, both within government and outside, excluding personal information
   - personal service contracts of individuals not appointed pursuant to the Civil Service Act, excluding personal information and service or product trade secrets
   - adjudication decisions of grievances filed by union employees

   Selection and Hiring process:
   - # of applicants for position
   - # of persons interviewed
   - name of successful candidate, once offer of employment has been accepted

3. Finance and Administration Division
   Expense/Travel claims:
   - total expenses paid to an individual either monthly or in total within the current fiscal year. The summary page of the expense claim form can be provided for three months, per request
   - contracts for goods and services excluding personal information and service or product trade secrets

   Other expenses:
   - rents paid by the Department for leased premises
   - cost of sending a delegation out of the province or out of the country to attend conferences/administrative meetings
   - overtime expenditures (current year-to-date) for specific divisions
   - expenditure reports, by category, (eg. salaries, travel, etc.) for a maximum of three categories per fiscal year

Department of Community Services continues to review information which may be provided under this policy and will up-date this policy accordingly.